

**Testimony Regarding Support for HB 5283 & SB 229 and
School Construction Funds for Public Charter Schools
March 4, 2022**

Members of the Education Committee,

I am sure you have evidenced that the pandemic further exacerbated students' needs as reflected in poor learning outcomes. This is largely due to the insufficient funds allocated to poorer districts who were **already below** Achievement Levels prior to the pandemic. If you prioritize and value education; put the money where our residents can benefit for generations that follow. I ask that you make the proud decisions of allocating funds for the improvement of Connecticut for all its students and residents.

I am Lourdes Delgado. I proudly served students for 38.5 years as a paraprofessional, teacher, and administrator retiring from the Bridgeport Public Schools. Being very familiar with education needs I immediately began to volunteer as the director of the Faith & Education Coalition of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference of Connecticut servicing communities state-wide. We support Advancing Student Achievement by advocating for high and comparable standards and local accountability to ensure all children have access to quality education regardless of zip code, income, or race. In addition, we provide training and resources for our parents toward "Raising Highly Capable Kids".

"Education Is Economic Development". We continuously underinvest in poorer areas knowing that the lack of investment in education ensures poverty. Meanwhile, we could be supporting and rigorously educating our students so they do not become dependent on society. We complain that the urban areas are not contributing to the tax base yet we are not investing to prepare our young people to earn an education that is competitive and lead them into a higher tax bracket. When will the poor communities be able to catch up without adequate education funding? This vicious cycle has to end. **We cannot continue to make our communities poorer! WE ALL fall victim to the results.**

Last week, a former colleague left teaching. She is one of the most dedicated and effective teachers one will ever meet. Any instructional leader would have wanted her on staff. She is a woman who gave 100% during days and weekends to ensure her students were learning and reaching achievement goals. Like her, I know of several other educators who have left teaching within the past year prior to being fully vested in their retirement. The burden for those who genuinely care and have high expectations has been very heavy. With limited resources it is almost impossible to achieve high outcomes with many students.

Lack of enrollment in College teaching programs speaks volumes to the fact that people fear entering a profession where they will feel self-defeated for not accomplishing goals even while working relentlessly. I have heard from other young people who simply will not consider teaching as a profession. As one who wanted to be an educator since the age of five, it is disheartening that the most noble profession of all, the one that **molds all other professions**, is not valued by our leaders.

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Meanwhile, with the current surplus, we have the funds to close the staggering education gap that cripples our communities and meet students' learning needs. Appropriate the funds to close the gap; hold educators accountable, offer School Choice options, invest in public charter schools and allow the Money to Follow the Child but include stringent accountability measures to ensure the direct support of student learning needs and learning outcomes.

Plato said, "*The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life.*"

There is no reason that in Connecticut, in the year 2022, so many students serviced by our Public Schools should only qualify to earn a wage that is at/or below the poverty level. Our prison system is filled with people who have been shut out of the economy and who had neither a quality education nor access to good jobs. Investing to ensure high quality education for all will remediate many facets of society's ills, many of which you may be faced with appropriating during this legislative session.

Invest in Education. It's a Win/Win for all.

Respectfully,

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